

Why I Plan to Study Latin

JUDITH LEONA GRABSKI

Rhetoric 101, Theme 1

PITY THE POOR LATIN LANGUAGE. ACCORDING TO SOME self-appointed authorities, it has been dying for the past thousand years. These people would have buried the language long ago were it not for a few stubborn individualists who insist Latin still shows a few glimmers of life.

I number myself in this group, for I find Latin a living language, living, not in the sense that it is widely spoken, but in the enjoyment its literature arouses in those who take time to read it. One might logically ask why Latin doesn't attract more students, since it provides such enjoyment. The answer lies in the word "literature." The average second-year Latin student who reads at best a highly simplified version of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* cannot actually claim to be reading Latin literature. What he is reading is a Latin story retold by a modern author, probably an American Latin teacher. Convinced that Latin literature, as exemplified by Caesar, is dull, the erstwhile Latin student concludes his studies with a sigh of relief.

I almost followed this course of action until I admitted a readily apparent fact: Latin is a complex language. It contains case endings, verb declensions, innumerable points of grammar and usage. Therefore, any knowledge of Latin literature has to be based on a grasp of these difficult points. Since Latin literature has endured for centuries, I decided that it must be truly classic and worth the effort of learning grammar and vocabulary.

How glad I now feel that I decided to continue studying Latin! Vergil combined word-images with near perfect meter to produce the national epic of Rome, *The Aeneid*. This poem, on the "great book" lists of almost every compiler, can never retain its full grandeur and poetic beauty in translations. Cicero revealed the world of Roman politics, and Ovid the world of mythology. What translator can duplicate Cicero's oratorical effects? Such literature deserves to be read in its original tongue.

Having had a taste of Latin literature, I feel I must continue studying it. Authors who have delighted readers for centuries will become familiar to me, also. Plautus, Catullus, Horace, Pliny—each offers something different. I shall never grow bored with Latin.

Unfortunately, I can offer no practical reason for studying Latin. Some teachers, hoping to attract students, mention help with English vocabulary and greater ease in understanding common Latin expressions. These reasons spoil Latin. Why offer a bribe to attract students? The only sufficient reason for studying Latin is, I believe, the opportunity to read one of the world's great literatures.

Latin, approached in this manner, does not seem to be dying. It is still living in the minds of those who care to understand it.

The Gray Hat

JUDY PICKERILL

Rhetoric 101, Theme 6

HER NAME IS CHRISTINE, AND SHE HAS A GRAY HAT: a drab, metal-colored piece of cloth bunched on her head. She is a teacher; her profession and her name are probably the only non-descript things she lets herself be associated with. These two things are also the only facts I can mention about her with any certainty.

Oh, I could picture her hateful qualities and scandalous actions, but after I finished detailing them, I might doubt that they were really so bad. For one thing, she is too sure of herself, and for this reason alone I will always fight against loving her. Also, she gets an almost repulsive pleasure out of seeing people, including herself, make fools of themselves. And Christine never bothers to hide the fact that she cares only for herself. Once she almost convinced me that this was an admirable trait, and that in not hiding it, she was one of the few truly honest persons in the world.

The first time he met her, a person could describe Christine so perfectly that she would be recognized by anyone. I could have portrayed her that well after the first time I saw her too, but now all her characteristics seem somehow to have fused together until I can no longer segregate them from each other. And when I try to think about it, the only thing I know for certain is that she has a gray hat which she wears nearly everywhere.

Maybe I could talk about her features so that one would be able to picture her: for example, her eyes that in just a moment change hues like the ocean, from gray and bleak to warm-blue; or her walk, possibly—the way the awkwardness which is so evident when she is sitting vanishes when she moves her body; or the way she smiles—I do not like it, for every time I watch this expression of hers, it is as if I have known it somewhere before; or the too-short nose and the almost square jaw and the hair that she so hates—it is too often knotted at the nape of her neck. Right now, as I sit here in my room, I cannot see these features distinctly, for they all blur together into a tall, thin figure wearing a gray hat.

Her one conspicuously virtuous quality is that she lives in a world of music. She listens to music constantly, and if there is no instrument or machine near, she makes music in her mind. This I know she does, for she usually hides everything—her good features, her hateful qualities. But once in a while, there is a slight tinge of warmth in her expression that I know is the result of music. The music she loves could be chamber music or church hymns or even sounds of creaking boards upstairs or cheering crowds or noisy vacuum cleaners. She can also sense the rhythm in animal life and

tennis matches and just about everything. Even though she spends most of her life alone, she is seldom, or probably never, lonely.

I have forgotten the way her personality, attitudes, and characteristics affected me the first time I met her; I cannot even remember definitely what it is about her that once so astounded and shocked me. And yet something of her lingers on; some part of her refuses to leave. Perhaps I can best explain this feeling by giving an example in her language: If the bird which sings outside her window every morning suddenly vanished one day, she would be wretched; and after it had gone she would know that it was not the brilliant color or the dynamic pulse or the unusual feeling of the bird's song that she missed, but something instead less brilliant and less dynamic and less unusual, something that she could not even recognize definitely. It is in just the same way that I seem to be affected by an insignificant and unrecognizable trait of hers. If only I knew for certain what that thing is.

And still I see the gray hat.

A Letter from France

JULIE RYSTROM

Rheoric 101, Theme 6

Paris, April 30, 1726

My Dear Lord Peterborough:

What currently transpires in England? I can see no time in the immediate future in which I will be able to see for myself, inasmuch as my duties here are binding at present. In lieu of a personal visit with you, I would like to commend to your hospitality a young and very unusual Frenchman, Francois Arouet de Voltaire.

I am afraid, Milord, that I can not give you a graphic description of this man in terms of appearance. Once one knows the man, he is aware primarily of a powerful personality. However, in order that you have some concept of his appearance, I will generalize and describe Voltaire as being frail of bearing, short, and decidedly thin. His facial features are in agreement with his physical structure, being likewise thin and sharply outlined. Within this frame, I am convinced, lies the mind of a future leader of France; and behind eyes that seem continually to sparkle with sly amusement, lies the readiest wit I have yet encountered.

This young man is twenty-four. I met him three years ago through his godfather, the Abbe de Chateauxeux, current French ambassador to Holland. Before our actual introduction took place, there had been in circulation an

anecdote concerning him. Having heard it, I was looking forward to an occasion in which I would meet this roguish youth and determine for myself what mettle he was made of. I was not disappointed. Allow me, Milord, to repeat the incident creating this gossip. It is entirely indicative of Voltaire's character.

I know you are aware of the internal conditions now prevalent in France. With Louis XIV gone, and Phillippe d'Orleans ruling for the young king, the people seem to regard themselves as free from a restraining yoke; they look to the new regency to provide the much-needed measures of reform. Carrying this hope in mind, tongues have spoken freely, and pens have scrawled indiscriminately. Voltaire was the author of several pieces of a libertarian nature. These, along with the credit for some he did not write, moved the Regent to consign Voltaire to the Bastille. When you have met Voltaire, you will understand why such a confinement should be so unendurable to his kind of person. Voltaire writes and speaks for the amusement or edification of those listening; castle walls, I am sure, are quite unresponsive.

At the end of eighteen months the Regent released Voltaire. As the story is told, Voltaire saw the Regent a few days later. Voltaire's share in the conversation went something like this: "Monseigneur, I should be well pleased if His Majesty deigned to provide for my keep, but I beg your highness to make no further provisions for my lodgings." Milord, this is the sort of individual he is, indomitable.

The young man was in the Bastille again a week ago, but on a charge so slight he was released a few days afterward. The incident involved an impending duel with one of the Rohans, an extremely powerful house in France. The Chevalier Rohan panicked and used the family name to obtain imprisonment papers. As a matter of fact, the Chevalier did not have that much trouble to concern himself with; Voltaire wields a pen far more eloquently than he does a sword.

Despite his release, it is advisable for Voltaire to endure a temporary exile. I have talked with him, and he has expressed a sincere wish to visit our country with its elected Parliament and its absence of *lettres de cachet*. This latter is an especially understandable support for his desire. During his stay, I would consider it a personal favor if you would devote some time to showing this young visitor our homeland.

I am not assigning you a distasteful task. Voltaire is a novel companion. In no man will you find such a keen wit accompanied by such a depth of intelligent perception.

Your servant,
HORACE WALPOLE
Ambassador to France

Why I Want to Be a Poet

JANE LEWIS

Rhetoric 101, Theme 2

WHEN I LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME OR READ a description of the "typical" American, I become sad and disgusted with the fickle, foul-mouthed, foolhardy persons referred to by their confederates as "good fellows." I also become afraid that I will be caught up in their mad scramble for pleasure and eventually embrace their materialistic philosophy. And yet I see a few bright beings who deserve the adjectives kind, good, noble, and wise and have escaped somehow the corruption which has soiled their contemporaries. Then I ask myself what keeps them pure, what laws they live by, and what makes them what they are. I think the answer is that each of them possesses the soul of a poet.

A poet is not necessarily a writer of verse. He is one who lives on a higher plane than the average person. He is in closer touch with the spiritual, while at the same time he has a more objective view of the confused mass that is humanity. He is alone but not lonely; he is separate and yet a part of the whole; he sees his individual truth yet recognizes the general. A poet's mind is broad and his heart is large, for he must comprehend the universe and still remain in it.

A poet lives life more fully than most people. He experiences more emotions, he thinks more thoughts, he dreams more dreams than other people. This happens because he reaches out to life and all it holds instead of waiting in terror for he knows not what. A poet looks harder at the world and consequently sees more than his fellow men. He appreciates all he sees and profits by it.

A poet is not self-sufficient. He needs people. He needs love. He needs God. He knows he is not his own creator nor the only contributor to his development. A poet is not content with what he is. True to Browning's precept, he reaches for that which is beyond his grasp.

A poet has an obligation to the world: because he has so much, he must give of his abundance. He must share his wisdom and distribute the fruit of his insight. Because he knows love, he must love without limit. Because he understands suffering, he must endure pain. And his peace of mind, which comes of knowledge of himself, should afford a haven to his associates. Above all, he must not lose what he has; he must not succumb to the noonday devil.

When I think of the people I know who fit into the pattern I have just described, I wish with all my heart to be like them, or as nearly like them as I have the capacity to be. I think the only way I can prevent my becoming the sort of person I most detest is to try to become the sort of person I most admire. That is why I want to be a poet.

Discussion of a Shakespearean Sonnet

NANCY KOCHENDERFER

Rhetoric 102, Theme 2

PRAYER TO VENUS

Lovely Cythera, goddess of love,
 Who rose from the foaming Cyprian coast,
 Around whom broods the mellow-mourning dove
 That murmurs of Love's unvanishing ghost,
 Help me forget my beloved's embrace
 That fill'd my heart with golden happiness;
 Erase the memory of the dear face
 That haunts me in my shadowy sadness.
 Once again darkness shrouds my wither'd soul
 With despairing hopelessness and sorrow,
 And I am left without purpose or goal
 Or thought of what may come on the morrow.
 O, hear my prayer, my anguished cry,
 And let me forget, or let me die!

Some of the problems involved in writing a Shakespearean sonnet became painfully clear to me when I attempted to write my sonnet, "Prayer to Venus." As a result of discovering these problems and trying to solve them I feel that I have attained not only a clearer understanding of the construction and versification of the sonnet, but also a keener appreciation of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, poets who were masters of the sonnet. Indeed, I believe that no student can truly appreciate Shakespeare's sonnets until he has attempted to write a sonnet of his own.

When I sat down to write a sonnet, the first problem that I encountered was that of choosing a subject which I could handle sufficiently in fourteen lines. Obviously I couldn't relate a story or tell a complicated legend, because I would find it difficult to set down all the details, images, and facts that are necessary in the development of a long story. Although I certainly realized that intensity and compactness of thought are virtues of poetry, I felt that a legend should be described at greater length than a sonnet allows. William Sharpe tells us that "for the concise expression of an isolated poetic thought—an intellectual or sensuous wave keenly felt, emotionally and rhythmically—the sonnet would seem to be the best medium. . . ." Therefore, I decided to describe one emotion, the emotion that a girl feels when her lover has gone. I wrote the sonnet in the first person because I feel that a love poem is more poignant and personal when the girl herself seems to be telling the story.

The problem with which I had the most difficulty was that of fitting the words that I wished to say with the rime scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet. For example, in line two of my sonnet I would have preferred to substitute the word *shore* for the word *coast*, but I couldn't find a synonym for ghost in line four. Actually the two words differ little in meaning, but I prefer the alliteration of "Cyprian shore" rather than the phrase "Cyprian coast." I found that I constantly had to change the meaning of the sentences and order of the words to fit the rime scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet, which is a-b-a-b-c-d-c-d-e-f-e-f-g-g.

Another problem with which I had difficulty was that of compressing or enlarging my thoughts to fit the meter of the sonnet. Sometimes I was forced to use adjectives which seemed rather trite or flat to me in order to fill up the decasyllabic line. Examples of this "padding" are "despairing hopelessness" and "anguished cry." In the last line of my sonnet there are only nine syllables because I couldn't word it in the way I wanted to with ten syllables. I considered inserting the word *him* after "And let me forget," but I felt that the meaning of the poem would be destroyed. I wanted to convey the idea that the girl wants not only to forget *him*, but also to forget his *love*.

Although I had difficulty with the meter and rime scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet, I am fairly well satisfied with my first attempt to write a sonnet. The meter and rime seemed to become more and more natural as I went along. Although I felt rather restricted by the form of the sonnet, actually it is meant to be a guide rather than a hindrance. I felt that eventually I could learn to confine my thoughts to its form. Wordsworth, one of the greatest poets of all times, wrote the following sonnet on the subject of the strict rime-phrase of the sonnet:

Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room
And hermits are contented with their cells
And students in their pensive citadels:
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sits blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom
High as the highest peak of Turners Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells.
In truth the prison unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground,
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

Untold Ages

DONALD R. JEPSEN

Rhetoric 101, Theme 9

A FEELING OF COMPASSION AND PITY THROBBED IN MY heart as I sat in the sun-scorched car outside the gasoline station in the small, nearly abandoned town in Arizona. Except for a very few dilapidated dwellings sparsely placed near the main thoroughfare, there was little evidence of life present. It could easily be observed that the mainstay of the small community of approximately thirty-five inhabitants was the highway itself.

The crude, adobe buildings, capable of withstanding the gusty winds and intense heat of the sun, stood steadfast in their place, facing the concrete road from a respectable distance. Appearing sadly neglected and time-stained, the mud-packed, square structures seemed tranquil, in spite of their rambling appearances. Ancestral in design, they were sufficient in size for the local dwellers; each wall leaned upon the other as if sapped of its lifeblood's strength and was bare of windows except for two small, round openings in the east wall of each building. These openings permitted ample year-round ventilation and allowed a sufficient amount of air to permeate the walls during dust storms that often came from the west. The doorway in the front wall was covered with a faded, hand-woven blanket, bleached by the sun's rays.

As I glanced down the row of structures, my eyes fell upon a bent figure of a man crossing the road. Wielding a cane of knotted oak in one hand, he slowly prodded his way across the highway, heedless of the possibility of oncoming traffic. He attempted to shield his eyes from the blinding glare of the sun's rays upon the pavement. As he squinted against the burning glare, wrinkles creased his face. His deeply-bronzed skin seemed to shadow his innermost thoughts; harrowed and molded by time, his face covered his past like a painted canvas, showing the effort of his labors and revealing his remorse and decrepitude. The shabby clothes that hung on his weakened limbs indicated his toil for bare subsistence.

As I turned my eyes away, trying to avoid the disturbing sight, I saw a small jumping spider lazily sunning itself on the wooden handle of the ancient-looking town pump, which was surrounded by clumps of sand-brown grass. Feeding nearby on a beetle caught atop the pump's platform was a contented little cactus wren. It hastily devoured its catch, unaware of surrounding life, of the approaching spider, of the old man crossing the road, or of the drifting sand caught up in the wafts of the gathering wind and carried over the desolate plains dotted with cactus. From across the sand-covered plains could be heard the muffled cry of a prairie dog as it sat perched above its

underground home ready to retreat as it warned of the arrival of a Cooper's hawk. My lingering thoughts of the old man were replaced by an awareness of the circling hawk. As my eyes wandered about, following the flight of the nearing bird, my mind wandered also; the searching hawk and the wind-swept old man seemed to share a likeness: each was seeking subsistence.

Not until the screaming hawk made an unerring dive for its prey was I shocked into reality. The feelings of compassion and pity slowly ebbed away as my thoughts faded into the rearing cloud of dust. Life would continue and function as it had always, even after I had left. The car was new enshrouded by the huge ball of choking dust; as I wiped the smarting tears from my eyes, I no longer saw the old man; the cactus wren had taken flight; the hawk had made its capture.

The Uncommon Man

JOHN D. WAGNER

Rhetoric 102, Theme 3

TODAY, MUCH IS SAID ABOUT THE "COMMON MAN," THE average fellow. Millions of dollars are spent each year on surveys and polls to find out his needs, his desires, his habits and his pleasures. This "common man" is the object of most of the advertising seen today. Most insurance rates are based on the mathematical probability that a hypothetical "common man" will have some ill luck. In everyday conversation, the concept of the "common man" shows up frequently. "What the average guy would have done was to. . . ." The "common man" seems to be the embodiment of every human being on earth.

But although the "common man" has a bit of every human trait, he does not really exist. He is no more than a mathematical figure, a rate on an insurance man's desk, a figure of speech.

There are no true "common men." The existence of one would be a psychiatrist's dream; the presence of several would be a sociologist's nightmare. He is only an average. If I were to draw several hundred dots on a piece of paper and construct a line on the paper so that the sum of the distances from the line of all the points on one side of the line equalled the sum of the distances from the line of all the points on the other side, the line would probably not pass through any of the points. The average of four and two is three, yet three is neither four nor two. Likewise, the average man is a line between the billions of dots which represent humanity as a whole. He represents all of the dots, but he is none of them. Thus the "common man" is truly the uncommon man.

Three Autumns, Three Leaves, and Death

MICHAEL BURNETT

Rhetoric 101, Theme 4

I

THE AIR HAD THINNED. NO LONGER WAS IT HEAVY, sleepy, droning with the sound of many insects; no longer was it still. Something had awakened it—it moved, it buffeted, it swirled and ruffled the gossamer wings of the little fly that hung, weakly, to the lattice of a screen door. Somehow, the fly had been swept outside, and now it could not return. Seaching helplessly for a hole in the screen—a futile hope to return to the warmth within and the stupid, lazy, sun-laden days of before—the fly braced against the quickening breeze. A withered grape fell. A spider web tore. A snake slid into a hole. A thistle blew by, watched by a ruffled wren. A wrinkled larva settled in the foetal darkness of its sleep. At last the tortured wings crumpled, the wandering legs lost direction, and the little body of a fly fell lifelessly to the ground and was tumbled by the wind and finally hidden beneath the dusty creases of a leaf.

II

A priestly elm once stood here; you can see part of a charred stump where it once was. It was a happy thing; tossed by the warm breezes, rejoicing in the brilliant munificence of the sun. It could be sad though, too; dressed in black robes, quietly praying to the winter sky, its nude arms reaching silently in enduring anguish. It was always alive, constantly aware. It knew before any of us when a storm was coming, and it would sway excitedly in anticipation. We always looked to it to see if there was wind enough to fly our kites—it always knew. At first we did not know anything had happened. That spring, though, when only one branch was green and fresh, we knew. The one branch waved courageously all summer, but we knew. When the first chill wind blew, we awoke to find a yellow cross on its patient trunk. Nothing now remains, but in each of our rooms, deep within the pages of a dusty book, lie the pressed remains of a single perfect leaf.

III

Probing roots thrust deeply in the soil. Beneath, damp life rests fertile, darkly kept. Above, the frozen quiet settles, snapping dry twigs. Starved spiders wander, limping nowhere. Lifeless branches grapple for the lifeless sky. A silenced cicada hurriedly leaves its useles shell and burrows under the

sand. Deep it goes, where great tree's roots are rounded threads, seducing black earth to part. Here it curls, softly making ready for its sleep. The womb is warm. The earth is damp. The sleep is dark, and all is safe. Above, the empty wind searches, blind, dumb, and senseless. With a rasp it blows together two skeletons of what has gone below: a waste and broken cicada shell, its clutching claws lost and empty, and a torn, dried leaf.

A Defense of My Generation

MARY PARKER

Rhetoric 102, Final Examination

A LITTLE MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO, MY FATHER grabbed me by the shoulders, looked sternly into my eyes and said, "You mean you are seventeen, and you are not even engaged yet?" As far as I know, my father meant that statement as a joke. But lately my instructors, in classrooms and in books, figuratively grab me by the shoulders, announce that I am now nineteen, and ask why I do not rebel. Unlike my father these latter seem to be serious.

All of the recent attacks on the younger generation seem to revolve around one central theme. We are not youthful. We are not rebellious, and youth is supposed to be rebellious. My generation is not idealistic, and youth is traditionally idealistic. Youths are supposed to be the dreamers. Instead of shouting and crying and laughing with youthful exuberance, we are silent and withdrawn. Oh, we cry—but only when the pain is personal. And we laugh—at Charlie Chaplin movies. We do indeed seem prematurely middle-aged.

Because of the war and other factors, the generation before ours had to grow up fast too. Their disillusionment was forced upon them early. And their shock and wonder led them to talk about it and write about it, sometimes with almost explosive impact. This is the generation that looks at us and asks "Where are your fireworks? You are in the same situation we where in. Do you have no vitality or spark?"

But their accusation is not quite correct. Although we are in the same situation, we did not arrive at it in the same way. They were disillusioned. We had no illusions to start with.

Analysis of a Paragraph

IRA J. PIEL

Rhetoric 102, Theme 2

"No, Mr. McCarthy, you hadn't told me," I said, stepping hard on the gas. As the battered old car leapt forward I began to feel free as a bird; a curious sense of relief and release came over me. And expectation. We sped along, finally shedding the last scars of town, and at length climbed a long granite-girt hill. Gaining the top we seemed breathlessly to hang in mid-air. Spread out far below us was the tremendous expanse of the big lake: beautiful, empty, glittering, cold and brooding, gull-swept and impersonal; always there, always the same—there for the grateful and the ungrateful, there for the bastards and the angels, there for the just and the unjust alike.

—from *Anatomy of a Murder* by Robert Traver

THE THEME OF THIS EXCERPT IS SIMPLY YET EFFECTIVELY portrayed because no awkward constructions, unnecessary verbiage, or other impediments distort its presentation. The many details employed produce a definite picture of the moving scenery and of the changing attitudes of the main character. Even when reading rapidly, one has no trouble following the motion of the "battered old car" as it leaves the town and enters the quiet, picturesque country scene. Nor does the reader have difficulty in sensing the driver's moods as they change from anxiety to relief to expectation to awe and finally to calm enchantment. This ease of interpretation is a tribute to the simplicity of the paragraph.

Although the paragraph is written in a simple, uncomplicated manner, its diction is original and exact. For example, one does not often think of leaving the city limits as "shedding the last scars of town," nor of a lake as ". . . empty, glittering, cold and brooding, gull-swept and impersonal," yet these phrases effectively convey both the appearance and the psychological effect of the scene. In addition, the use of a large number of adjectives (comprising almost one third of the total number of words) vividly portrays situations and settings, but leaves enough opportunity for interpretation by the reader to stimulate imagination and interest. Thus, the diction of the passage also contributes greatly to its vitality and character.

Just as important as simplicity and diction in determining the success of the paragraph is the variety of sentence length and construction. The above quotation contains six sentences (one of which is a fragment used for effect) with, in order, fourteen, twenty-six, two, eighteen, eleven, and forty-nine words. These sentences begin with an interjection, an adverb clause, a conjunction, a pronoun, a participial phrase, and a verb clause, respectively. By stimulating interest, this grammatical variety lends addi-

tional appeal to the selection and, in this way, is the third major factor in the effectiveness of the paragraph.

These elements of style—simplicity, diction, and variety—give distinctive character and effectiveness to the paragraph, for without them the writing would be merely a statement of ideas, as the following summary of the paragraph demonstrates: I was relieved after I left town and saw the lake in the country. Surely a mere statement of ideas is not enough; an effective style is needed to give vitality and character to writing.

Miles Davis: Anomaly of Containment

RONALD SHUMAN

Rhetoric 101, Theme 6

THE MAN STANDS NOW, TRUMPET IN HAND, MUSING IN A corner of the stage: on his temples glisten beads of sweat, remnants of a moment's writhing with voiceless anger that for an instant is turned to sound. He paces back and forth, listens for a moment as the rest of the band continues to play, and finally leaves the stage altogether. Action like this is typical of the pensive, impassive figure that is Miles Davis; and if indeed he is aware of the audience at all, he chooses not to show his awareness. Always there prevails about this man an air of self-imposed aloofness, a forced and ominous calm.

The jazz idiom has been, and continues to be, a performer's art; as such, it makes great demands on the musician beyond technical skill and imagination. There is a certain unnamed quality that must appear in a jazz performer if he is to command continuing attention; without this elusive quality, the musician who must create continuously loses his identity and becomes simply a voice without a soul.

In the case of Miles Davis, the quality that captures and enthralls audiences is a sense of delicately contained chaos. This same quality, which overshadows all other possible aspects of his personality, he uses as a weapon in his continuing battle to hold audiences' attention; he asserts it time and again in his playing, and a hand grenade could not be more effective.

With uncanny accuracy, Davis is able not only to express lyrical improvisations which are unquestionably his own, but at the same time to suggest in every note he plays the pain of silent turmoil and of tightly bound compassion that threatens to escape.

Where My Roots Are

MICHAEL KINNEY

Rhetoric 101, Theme 13

I WAS BORN AND BROUGHT UP IN A SMALL TOWN IN THE Middle West, and I am glad of it. Paxton, Illinois, lies near the middle of the state, in flat farm lands slightly scarred by quiet streams. Always on the horizon there are trees. Between the mist of spring and the haze of the fall of the year you may see daisies in the blue grass, or fireflies in the corn at nightfall. On hot nights you may smell the growing corn and the red clover. The dust from white gravel roads powders the ironweed and the stake-and-rider fences as summer wears on. The yellow water lilies grow in the quiet place this side of the bend in the creek, and the white sand boils up in the bottom of the spring. On July and August afternoons the sky darkens into thunder and quick rain, which is good for the corn.

I do not look back upon my life in Paxton as a lost paradise. It was no paradise. Nor is it lost; things are not lost while they are loved in remembering. Besides, I am still a certain kind of small-town Middle Westerner. I do not think of myself as one escaped from bondage. My life feels continuous to me. What is in it goes back to Paxton, where my roots are.

The Promise of the Star

WILLIAM SCHILLER

Rhetoric 101, Theme 2

I SAT QUIETLY ON THE HIGH ROOF, GAZING AT THE SKY from the darkness. The newspapers had encouraged an early watch if the new United States satellite was to be seen that night. Already the sky above was speckled with numerous stars strewn among the feathery wisps of dimly lighted clouds. When the man-made body circled overhead, there would be no mistaking it. This miniature moon was said to be the brightest object in the evening sky, outshining either star or planet.

The warm, summer breeze caressed my hair and lulled my mind with the soft sounds of people stirring far away. It was so easy to be content with just the happenings around one, never thinking of the problems that lay beyond immediate concern. When the shifting clouds began to engulf the few remaining stars it was not hard to forget the tiny machine whirling

somewhere above. Before my watch could indicate the desired countdown, the vision of the heavens had been obliterated by the clouds. The space capsule soared over unseen that night, almost as though it had never existed. How simple things would be if that tool of mankind had not been sent up to probe those mysterious secrets. How satisfied we could all remain, with our eyes half closed to the problems surrounding our world.

But the satellite was there. It would take more than sleepiness and clouded skies to erase the centuries-old dreams of man. Nature herself could not deny man's right to carve a foothold in the starry roof overhead. The searching human mind reaches far beyond the worldly limitations that it was first given. The science of an ambitious mankind progresses with a steady desire to appease its appetite for answers.

As I scurried down from the roof that night, I felt perhaps a little as the ancient Moses might have at the edge of his precious territory. I had been deprived of what the eye could see, but I had been inspired to open my very mind and marvel at all of the dreams of the future. Tomorrow itself is the promised land.

The Imagery of Stephen Crane

BENNIE D. BABB

Rhetoric 102, Theme 11

"Of all Crane's qualities as a writer, it is, I think, his metaphorical imagination that most impresses the reader. Again and again one is struck by some particularly vivid piece of imagery."¹

FROM START TO FINISH, *THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE* is a series of images "so brilliant and detached . . . that, like illuminated bodies actually seen, they leave their fever-bright phantasms floating before the brain."² One need but observe the title to discover that here is a novel that is as much a painting as it is a narrative. However, the multitude of images, while occasionally used to expand or clarify the interpretation of a particular action, are found to form patterns that reveal the tone and purpose of the novel. Without an understanding of these "runic signatures which run through the whole body of Crane's writings,"³ the novel becomes little more than the tale of a farm lad who went to war, overcame an initial

¹ Austen McC. Fox, ed. *Maggie and Other Stories by Stephen Crane*, (New York, 1960), p. xiv.

² George Wyndham, "A Remarkable Book," *New Review*, XIV (Jan. 1896), 36.

³ John Shroeder, "Stephen Crane Embattled," *University of Kansas City Review*, XVII (Winter 1950), 124.

cowardice and earned the right to call himself a man. Stephen Crane wrote much more than this in *The Red Badge of Courage* and his imagery is the key to his message.

Crane's continuous use of imagery to set the tone and show the underlying meaning of the novel can be divided into the distinct patterns formed by these images. Although these image patterns overlap to the extent that the same metaphor is used in different contexts at various stages, they serve to reinforce each other and are consistent in the structure of the novel as a whole. The four distinct patterns are the irony which pervades the entire novel, the non-volitional nature of man, the impassive role of nature in relation to man, and the senselessness of war.

First, the title itself becomes an image of irony when the reader learns that the hero's *Red Badge of Courage* is received behind the lines and far from the enemy. Yet, ironically, it is this wound which allows Henry to return honorably to his regiment. Long before this, however, Crane has set the mood of irony which permits the reader to view Henry with a detached, yet sympathetic, interest. In the first chapter, by means of a flashback, we have seen that although Henry "had burned several times to enlist,"⁴ his mother had managed to hold him back until "Almost every day the newspapers printed accounts of a decisive victory."⁵ These counterpoised images of Henry Fleming as would-be hero and as actually portrayed are sustained throughout the novel, until at the end we find the boy who had left the peaceful scene of "his mother kneeling among the potato parings"⁶ now turning "with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—an existence of soft and eternal peace."⁷ In addition to pointing out such repeated ironic images of Henry himself, Mordecai Marcus has noted that the image pattern of men presented as animal-like creatures contributes to a major structural irony which shows cowardice and courage to be similarly bestial.⁸

This same animal imagery is carried through *The Red Badge of Courage* to maintain Crane's thesis of determinism in Henry's actions and in the actions of both armies. "Men, guns, and conflicts are likened to savage or monstrous animals. A Confederate charge is like 'an onslaught of redoubtable dragons.' The Union men are 'morsels for the dragons,' and Henry waits in terror 'to be gobbled.' From a point of vantage, 'he conceived the two armies to be at each other panther fashion.' The bark of the enemy's infantry is 'like the yellings of eager, metallic hounds.' He saw 'a spray' of soldiers 'go in houndlike leaps toward the wavering blue lines. There was

⁴ Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, ed. Richard Lettis et al. (New York, 1960), p. 4.

⁵ Crane, p. 5.

⁶ Crane, p. 6.

⁷ Crane, p. 87.

⁸ "The Unity of *The Red Badge of Courage*," in *The Red Badge of Courage, Text and Criticism*, ed. Richard Lettis, et al. (New York, 1960), pp. 189-192.

much howling, and presently it went away with a vast mouthful of prisoners.' The side of Jim Conklin, who dies in the field, looks as though it had been 'chewed by wolves.' The body of the Tattered Soldier had been 'gored' by bullets."⁹ This second basic pattern of deterministic action and reaction can be seen not only in the frequent animal metaphors applied to men but also in "the variety of ways in which Crane stresses the survival theme by his handling of food and drink."¹⁰ These images portraying survival and instinct also overlap into one of the finer drawn ironies of the novel, since views of men placed so close to elemental nature are juxtaposed by a continuing indifference on the part of nature itself.

This third pattern of nature's impassiveness in man's struggles is most readily seen while Henry is wandering behind the lines: at one time nature seems to be on his side, for the squirrel has enough sense to run from danger; then nature is against him, for the corpse of a dead soldier lies in his path. Henry feels that the branches are trying to hold him at this scene. Throughout it all, nature has remained unchanged. Austen Fox has further pointed out that "Often it is the opening description in Crane's stories that strikes the note of indifference of the universe, and swirling dust, rain, snow, or fog becomes a symbol of this indifference . . . it was fog, too, in *The Red Badge of Courage*."¹¹ According to Stanley Greenfield, nature "is not flatly indifferent . . . but cheerfully so,"¹² This impassive role of nature has been further detailed by Edward Stone in his analysis of the sun which at least twice in its appearance is a "synonym of indifference, of unconcern with human travail, however grim: aloof, it has gone about its golden business of maturation."¹³

The fourth basic pattern, which shows the senselessness of war, is revealed in the again overlapping imagery of determinism and nature's indifference. The animal-like actions of the men in battle are constantly reinforced by images of "hideously sub-human forces: 'The guns squatted in a row like savage chiefs. . . . It was a grim pow-wow'; the guns 'belched and howled like brass devils . . .'; the din of musketry grows 'like a released genie of sound.' . . . The Confederates charge, 'running like pursued imps.' The Union men 'screamed and yelled like maniacs'; they 'burst out in a barbaric cry of rage and pain.' . . . Every figure in the book supports the atmosphere of unreason."¹⁴ Charles Child Walcutt has also noted that the scenes of battle are described in terms that suggest a solemn farce or a cosmic and irresponsible

⁹ Winifred Lynskey, "Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*," *Explicator*, VIII, 3 (Dec. 1949), Item 18.

¹⁰ Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Unmistakable Stephen Crane," *PMLA* LXXIII (Dec. 1958), 568.

¹¹ Fox, p. xv.

¹² Greenfield, p. 569.

¹³ The Many Suns of *The Red Badge of Courage*, *American Literature*, XXIX (Nov. 1957), 324-325.

¹⁴ Lynskey, *loc. cit.*

game.”¹⁵ Throughout all scenes and references to war and battle, Crane maintains his assertion that war is senseless by his constant comparisons of armies and weapons to either animals or mindless demons.

These four patterns, which are so vividly imaged throughout the novel, provide the means for understanding the true greatness of Crane's theme in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Unless we view Henry with irony, we might easily be led to associate ourselves with the hero and become sympathetic with his rationalizations. Unless we see the pattern of determinism which shapes Henry's actions, through both cowardice and courage, we might easily believe that Henry has truly redeemed himself. Unless we are continuously aware of the indifference of nature to man's struggles, we might easily regard war as a thing of importance to the universe. Unless we understand Crane's insistence that war is senseless, we might easily feel that perhaps a little good—the maturing of men—can come from war. While Crane does not negate the possibility of man improving himself, he clearly shows that war is not the route he should take.

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¹⁵ "Stephen Crane: Naturalist and Impressionist," *American Literary Naturalism, a Divided Stream* (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 82.

A Paragraph

On this assignment the students were restricted to twelve sentences: four simple, four complex, and four compound or compound-complex. The only restriction on the content was that it be descriptive.

Beautiful Death

PAUL T. DIX

Rhetoric 101, Theme 4

A GENTLE BREEZE RIPPLED THE TOPS OF THE LUSH grass and sped on across the wide expanse of glistening beach. Dotted here and there with stately palm trees, the sandy shore extended itself along a mile of the blue Pacific. The rays of the full moon formed a pattern that changed as each wave in succession spent itself on the white sand. The air was crisp and invigorating, and held a fine mist. The same wind that blew the grass into motion would stir the sand into little dunes that resembled their bigger brothers on the deserts of the world. Suddenly a shadow glided across the water, and a large ebony bird, its feathers ruffled and tattered, flew erratically across the beach. By chance it happened to land on an old sign on the outside edge of the sand. The giant bird was nervous, and when a brisk wind suddenly blew across his back, he cawed in terror. The moon went behind a cloud, and a large wave thundered against the beach. A strong, cold wind blew up quickly, and the confused crow took flight. His flight was straight as an arrow until he reached the middle of the beach, where he gave a sickly cry and plummeted to the earth, dead. Then the moon came out from behind the cloud and made the ancient sign legible; it read "RADIATION CONTAMINATED—THIS AREA OFF LIMITS."

Rhet as Writ

Battle of Antietam: The topography allowed Lee to rest his flanks on the Potomac River.

Turning around, I saw a small boy soaked from head to toe with big tearful eyes.

Specious: roomy, extended. The specious grounds about the estate included a small lake, a forested area, and playing fields of various types.

Heinous: a noun referring to a monarch. Her heinous, the queen, will see you now.

Mutability: the ability to remain silent for long periods of time.

Furthermore, an Algerian nationalist is considered a rebel, traitor, deserter, and a bad citizen.

My desk, small but sturdy, has the look of age and wisdom about it, for like me and many others it has held the materials of education within its drawers.

